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Environment Committee

John A. Kissel, State Senator, 7th District
March 8, 2010

***Re: SB 207 AAC Recent Increases in Hunting and Fishing Licenses and Amending
Certain Motor Vehicle Fines.***

Good morning Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, Senator McKinney, Representative Chapin and members of the Environment Committee. Thank you for raising *SB 207 An Act Concerning Recent Increases in Hunting and Fishing Licenses and Amending Certain Motor Vehicle Fines*. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of this legislation of which I am a co-sponsor. Last year the state budget agreement included language that doubled hunting and fishing license fees. SB 207, as currently written, would partially reduce the license fee increases. This would provide some welcome relief to sportsmen, whose love for the outdoors is being exploited for the State's financial gain.

As you know, I proposed legislation this year that would have completely repealed the increases in hunting fees that were a part of last year's budget. I do not believe the budget should have been balanced on the backs of sportsmen, a significant number of which are elderly. Realistically, many sportsmen may forgo purchasing licenses because they simply cannot afford them. I do not want to see a situation where long-time license holders get penalized with heavy fines because they are not able to afford to buy a license this year.

I have spoken with several sportsmen in my district, most of whom are conservationists. They willingly pay their hunting and fishing license fees because they know the money is being used to protect the environment in which they enjoy their sport. They also acknowledge that they share some responsibility to help resolve the State's budget problem, even though they didn't create it. They have pointed out to me that doubling the fees will significantly reduce the number of licenses sold and defeat the reason for the increase. That is why I believe SB 207 is a good compromise.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony. I believe we should do everything possible to decrease fees for fishing and hunting licenses. This bill represents a good start. I hope the committee will act favorably on this proposal and ensure that even during these difficult economic conditions sportsmen will still be able to take part in the outdoor activities they enjoy.